

Public-Private Partnership through Basketball Benefits Russian and American Youth

The National Basketball Association (NBA) coordinated the visit of a delegation of coaches and general managers to Moscow, Russia, May 6-9, 2005, for the European Final Four basketball tournament. At the request of the Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs (ECA) and our post in Russia, the NBA worked with the embassy to conduct a basketball clinic for Russian and American youth. The event exemplified public-private partnership with cooperation between the Department of State, the NBA and Spalding.

Fifty Russian and American boys and girls, ages 12 - 17, participated in the clinic held at the Anglo-American School of Moscow. To conduct the clinic, the NBA provided a tremendous delegation of Russian and American coaches, players and general managers. The delegation included: Mike Dunleavy, Head Coach of the Los Angeles Clippers; R. C. Buford, SVP and General Manager of the San Antonio Spurs; Rob Babcock, General Manager of the Toronto Raptors; Tony Ronzone, Director of International Scouting, Detroit Pistons; Dean Cooper, Director of Scouting, Houston Rockets; and Fabrizio Besnaci, International Scout for the Los Angeles Clippers. The International NBA delegation included: Dmitri Domani, player for Dynamo Moscow and the Russian National Team; Aleksandar Volkov, former NBA player and two-time Russian Olympian; and Arturas Kornivovas, former NBA player and two-time Lithuanian Olympian.

The clinic included group basketball drills, followed by a Q&A session with the players and coaches and autograph signing. In the final shoot-out for an overall winner, the girls ran away with it when Russian Ann Sokolova beat out all of the other finalists.

The NBA donated t-shirts and hats for all of the students as well as basketballs from Spalding that went to the participating schools and clubs. Each school received a basketball signed by the NBA delegation. Participation certificates were awarded to the youth jointly from the U.S. embassy and the NBA.

This initiative resulted in a great sports diplomacy event that highlighted Russians and Americans learning together. **We Love This Game!**